

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 HAVANA 02190 01 OF 02 311928Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 HA-05 AF-10
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 /118 W
-----026155 312005Z /64

P R 311505Z JUL 78
FM USINT HAVANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2672
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 HAVANA 2190

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, CU, UR, CH
SUBJECT: ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS ON CASTRO'S JULY 26 APEECH

REF: HAVANA 2157

1. I WAS INCLUDED WITH CHIEFS OF ALL DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS INVITED TO SANTIAGO DE CUBA JULY 25-27 FOR CASTRO'S SPEECH AND OTHER ACTIVITIES COMMEMORATING 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS ATTACK ON MONCADA BARRACKS. FOLLOWING PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS ON SPEECH SUPPLEMENT COMMENTS CONTAINED IN REFTEL.

2. CASTRO WAS ADDRESSING SEVERAL AUDIENCES SIMULTANEOUSLY IN THIS SPEECH. FIRST, HE FACED A LARGE LIVE AND TV AUDIENCE IN CUBA WHICH INCLUDED THOUSANDS OF FOREIGN GOVERNMENT, PARTY AND RADICAL YOUTH LEADERS INVITED HERE FOR THE MONCADA CEREMONIES AND THE SUBSEQUENT ELEVENTH WORLD YOUTH FESTIVAL. TO THIS GROUP HE CLEARLY WANTED TO PROJECT THE IMAGE OF A FORCEFUL AND EXCITING REVOLUTIONARY LEADER WITH BOLD POSITIONS ON MOST THIRD WORLD ISSUES. SECOND, HE WAS ADDRESSING THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT AND PARTICULARLY THE MINISTERIAL MEETING UNDERWAY IN BELGRADE. HERE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 HAVANA 02190 01 OF 02 311928Z

HE SOUGHT TO SEIZE THE INITIATIVE IN THE ONGOING DEBATE OVER THE PHILOSOPHICAL MEANING AND OPERATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF TRUE NON-ALIGNMENT, AND IN SO DOING TO DEFEND MOST EFFECTIVELY AGAINST ATTACKS ON CUBA'S INTERVENTIONIST POLICIES AND ON ITS DESIGNATION AS HOST FOR THE 1979 NAM SUMMIT. THIRD, CASTRO WAS AGAIN PAYING HIS DUE IN THIS SPEECH TO THE SOVIET UNION. THUS HE BLASTED THE UNITED STATES AS HYPOCRITICAL ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN ORDER TO HELP

DISTRACT WORLD ATTENTION FROM SOVIET EXPOSURE IN THIS AREA FOLLOWING THE DISSIDENTS' TRIALS. (BUT SEE MOSCOW 17734 SUGGESTING THAT HE WENT FURTHER THAN THE SOVIETS THEMSELVES WOULD DO - PERHAPS AS A STALKING HORSE.) HE GAVE FURTHER AID AND COMFORT TO THE SOVIETS BY ATTACKING CHINA EVEN MORE VIGOROUSLY AS A TRAITOR TO THE "CAUSE OF INTERNATIONALISM", ESPECIALLY IN VIETNAM, AND AS A SHAMEFUL ALLY OF IMPERIALISM.

3. THUS, WHILE CASTRO'S ATTACKS ON THE UNITED STATE (REFTEL) WERE VITRIOLIC AND AGGRESSIVE, STOPPING JUST SHORT OF A PERSONAL ATTACK ON PRESIDENT CARTER OVER HUMAN RIGHTS, I DO NOT THINK THAT THE US WAS REALLY HIS PRIMARY TARGET ON THE 26TH. RATHER, HIS PORTRAYAL OF THE EVILS OF THE US AS THE LEADER OF WORLD "IMPERIALISM", THE PRINCIPAL ADVERSARY OF THE SOCIALIST CAMP, AND HENCE THE COMMON ENEMY SERVED THROUGHOUT THE SPEECH AS AN ORATORICAL AND TACTICAL DEVICE FOR ACHIEVING HIS PRIMARY OBJECTIVES AS OUTLINED ABOVE. WHILE THE SPEECH ONCE AGAIN MAKES IT CLEAR THAT CASTRO VALUES OTHER POLICY INTERESTS, INCLUDING HIS ROLE IN AFRICA, ASPIRATIONS TO LEADERSHIP IN THE THIRD WORLD AND HIS ALLIANCE WITH THE USSR, WELL ABOVE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES, IT IS PREMATURE TO CONCLUDE THAT HE HAS WRITTEN OFF THE LATTER ENTIRELY. I SUSPECT THAT HE IS CONFIDENT THAT HIS LATEST RE-ESCALATION OF ANTI-AMERICAN RHETORIC IS STILL WITHIN MINIMUM BOUNDS OF ACCEPTABILITY AND WILL NOT DO FURTHER SERIOUS DAMAGE TO THE ALREADY CLOUDED PROSPECTS FOR US-CUBAN RELATIONS. IT IS INTERESTING IN THIS CONNECTION TO NOTE THAT AT LEAST ON ONE LONGSTANDING IRRITANT

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 HAVANA 02190 01 OF 02 311928Z

IN THOSE RELATIONS, THE STATUS OF PUERTO RICO, CASTRO OPTED FOR A BRIEF AND RELATIVELY INNOCUOUS CALL FOR THE "RIGHT" TO INDEPENDENCE. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE PROVOKED ONE OF THE MORE ENTHUSIASTIC REACTIONS FROM THE CROWD AT ANOTHER JUNCTURE WHEN HE SARCASTICALLY INVITED PRESIDENT CARTER TO RELEASE LOLITA LEBRON, THE WILMINGTON TEN AND OTHER PRISONERS. (DURING AND AFTER THE SPEECH A FLYER WAS CIRCULATED BY THE "COMITE NACIONAL PRO-LIBERTAD PRESOS NACIONALISTAS" OF RIO PIEDRAS, PUERTO RICO, CALLING IN A STRAIGHT-FORWARD MANNER FOR THE FREEDOM OF LEBRON, IRVING FLORES, OSCAR COLLAZO AND RAFAEL CANCEL.)

4. WITH RESPECT TO THE NAM, CASTRO CLEARLY OPTED FOR AN AGGRESSIVE RATHER THAN CONCILIATORY APPROACH TO THE CRITICISMS OF CUBAN POLICY AND THE DIFFERENCES OF PHILOSOPHY WHICH HAVE SURFACED. AGAIN USING THE UNITED STATES AS BOTH A BLUDGEON AND A WHIPPING BOY, HE ADDUCED NEWS REPORTS THAT THE USG HAD APPROACHED 15 NAM MEMBERS TO IMPUGN CUBA'S ROLE IN THE MOVEMENT. RHETORICALLY HE ASKED "SINCE WHEN DOES THE US HAVE THE RIGHT TO ACT AS MENTOR AND ORIENTOR OF THE NON-ALIGNED? WHO ARE THE IMPUDENT GOVERNMENTS WHICH OFFER THEMSELVES FOR THIS GAMD?" CASTRO THUS SOUGHT TO ISOLATE AND DISCREDIT AS US LACKEYS ANY COUNTRY WHICH MAY CRITICIZE CUBA AT BELGRADE OR BEYOND.

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PAGE 01 HAVANA 02190 02 OF 02 312000Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 HAVANA 2190

5. IT IS OF SIGNIFICANCE IN THIS CONTEXT THAT CASTRO POINTEDLY OMITTED SPECIFIC MENTION OF PRESIDENT TITO AMONG THE REVERED FOUNDERS OF THE NAM WHO, HE SAID, INCLUDED CUB, NASSER, NEHRU, NKRUMAH "AND OTHER LEADERS". FOR THE FIRST TIME CASTRO HIMSELF CRITICIZED EGYPT FOR ITS "POLICY OF A SEPARATE PEACE AND SURRENDER (ENTREGUISMO) AND ARGENTINO FOR ITS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. ONE MIGHT INTERPRET CASTRO'S CRITICISM OF THESE AND OTHER MODERATE NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES AS PLAYING MOSCOW'S GAME. I DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT HE WOULD RISK OFFENDING THEM AT THIS JUNCTURE IN NAM AFFAIRS IF HE DID NOT SEE IT DIRECTLY IN CUBAN INTERESTS TO DO SO. EMBASSY MOSCOW'S COMMENTS ON THE PLAY GIVEN TO THIS POINT THERE AND ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SOVIETS VIEW SUCH ATTACKS ON THE MODERATES AS FAVORABLE WOULD BE APPRECIATED.

6. THE PASSAGES ON CHINA AND VIETNAM WERE DISPROPORTIONATELY LONG AND VITRIOLIC EVEN FOR THIS SPEECH. THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE SEE BELOW) THAT THEY WERE STRENGTHENED IN THE FINAL STAGES OF SPEECH DRAFTING, PERHAPS TO PLEASE THE HIGH-RANKING VIETNAMESE DELEGATION PRESENT BUT MORE LIKELY TO SATISFY THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE SOVIET UNION. IN ANY CASE THE CHINESE AMBASSADOR, WHO HAD CAREFULLY POSITIONED HIMSELF NEAR THE EXIT, DEPARTED WHEN THE FIRST SHOT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 HAVANA 02190 02 OF 02 312000Z

WAS FIRED. (CUBAN PROTOCOL OFFICERS THOUGHTFULLY HAD A CAR WAITING TO TAKE HIM BACK TO THE HOTEL.)

7. NO DOUBT REFLECTING THE DIFFICULTIES OF MESHING ALL HIS TOPICS AND OBJECTIVES IN ONE ADDRESS, CASTRO UNCHARACTERISTICALLY READ FROM A PREPARED TEXT ON THIS OCCASION. IT WAS THEREFORE EVIDENT THAT HE SPOKE DELIBERATELY AND WITH PRECISION NOTWITHSTANDING HIS FREQUENTLY EMOTIONAL MESSAGE. I WAS COINCIDENTALLY SEATED NOT FAR FROM A CASTRO AIDE WHO WAS FOLLOWING A COPY OF THE SPEECH, PROBABLY TO NOTE ANY CHANGES IN THE AS-DELIVERED TEXT. THERE WERE APPARENTLY NONE OF SUBSTANCE, BUT I NOTED THAT THE TOUGH SECTION ON CHINA AND VIETNAM WAS TYPED ON DIFFERENT SIZE PAPER FROM THE OTHERS AND MAY THEREFORE HAVE BEEN INSERTED AT THE LAST MINUTE.

8. WHILE I HAVE NOT HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON CASTRO'S SPEECH DIRECTLY TO SENIOR CUBAN OFFICIALS, I HAVE MADE THE POINT TO DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES (INCLUDING SOME LIKE THE GUYANESE AMBASSADOR WHO ARE LIKELY TO PASS IT ON) THAT IT WAS EXTREMELY HARSH WITH RESPECT TO THE UNITED STATES AND THAT ONE PROBABLY EFFECT IS TO INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE BARTLETT AMENDMENT WILL BE APPROVED BY THE FULL CONGRESS. (THE CUBANS HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY INTERESTED IN THE PROGRESS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THAT RESOLUTION")

9. THE DEPARTMENT MAY ALSO BE INTERESTED TO KNOW THAT THE WESTERN AMBASSADORS (SPECIFICALLY THE BRITISH, CANADIAN, GERMAN, FRENCH, ITALIAN AND BERGIAN) REMAINED FIRMLY IN THEIR SEATS DURING ALMOST ALL OF CASTRO'S SPEECH, AS DID I, OF COURSE, AND WENT OUT OF THEIR WAY TO SHOW SOLIDARITY WITH ME AFTERWARDS. MOST LATIN AMERICAN CHIEFS OF MISSION ON THE OTHER HAND, WITH THE NOTABLE EXCEPTION OF THE VENEZUELAN AND ARGENTINE, WERE ON THEIR FEET APPLAUDING ENTHUSIASTICALLY WITH THE CROWD MUCH OF THE TIME.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CONDEMNATION, SPEECHES, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978HAVANA02190
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780313-0696
Format: TEL
From: HAVANA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978074/aaaaadjd.tel
Line Count: 202
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d5643570-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 HAVANA 2157
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1946336
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS ON CASTRO'S JULY 26 APEECH
TAGS: PDEV, PEPR, CU, UR, CH, US, (CASTRO RUZ, FIDEL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d5643570-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014